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MY MOTHER.

In Memorium.

BY "ALBYN."

HALIFAX, N. S.

PRINTED BY JAMES BOWES & SONS,

1868.

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BY "ALBYN." pseud.
Andrew Shiels.

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MY MOTHER.

"A foolish man despiseth his mother."

SOLOMON.

My Mother ! O my Mother, how I long,
To bid thy virtues live in simple song ;
How soothing to my spirit would it be,
To strew with flowers the turf that lies on thee—
Seal with love's signet what unbidden tears,
Have left unblotted in a length of years,
Retrieve thy mem'ry from oblivion's gloom,
And filial incense breathe upon thy tomb.
So may an ivy leaflet ever green,
In the hereafter upon mine be seen ;
Or when the debt :o Nature due is paid,
A violet may show where "Albyn's" laid.

Come ye celestial guardians of my youth,
My well beloved—Tenderness and Truth—
Tho' mournful sighs ascend from ev'ry line,
Be present now to favour my design.
No fabled Muse shall o'er my verse preside,
Mine is a theme admits no fancied guide ;
Affection calls ! let no such call be vain,
As is the counsel, such shall be the strain.

My own dear Mother ! Nature urges me
To some expression of my love to thee,
For those endearments lavish'd on the child,
Still on the scrolls of recollection piled—
The pleasing jests for my diversion made,
The Baby songs with kisses well repaid ;
Tales, oft repeated, still they seem'd so new,
And like the truth, I wished them to be true.
As diamonds gather'd in Golconda's mine,
I've treasured up whatever has been thine.

The little flowerplot, smallest of the small,
The Dial column in the garden wall,
The well wherein a fav'rite trout would come,
And wag his tail until he got a crumb ;

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And that dear spot whereon, O welcome guest,
 A skylark ev'ry summer had her nest.
 Nor did she startle as we went or came,
 But cower'd her head, and sat there just the same.
 Provided *Moss* with ever-curious eye,
 Did not approach her grassy couch too nigh.

Such were the freaks of infancy, the Boy
 Too has some relies to recount with joy,
 Tho' seeming trifles they augment the debt
 Of gratitude the *Man* would not forget ;
 If not the *Man*, then how much less the son—
 Who has already such a reck'ning run :
 And not the least, (tho' strange it may appear
 That childish things should loom so largely here.)
 But not the least albeit the merest toy,
 The kite your fingers fashioned, gave me joy.
 Nor was the rapture that it could convey
 Devoid of fear that it would fly away ;
 Bewilder'd often how the air so high,
 Could lift it up, and keep it in the sky,

Another speck, amongst a thousand more
 Is still distinguish'd in my youthful lore ;
 The water-wheel in miniature that run,
 In Cleughside copse my admiration won ;
 Which a *Herd Laddie* to divert his mind,
 When far “outbye” in solitude design'd.
 And then to turn it had contrived to bring
 The veriest driblet from a distant spring.
 All trivial sorrows, such as mine could be,
 Were lost in visits to that “Mill,” with thee.

Class'd with the keepsakes time consents to spare,
 The Bees, and Beehives are preserved with care ;
 Their story told in accents soft and sweet,
 My questionings would call thee to repeat :
 O happy days ! how bright in weal and woe,
 On memory's mysterious map they glow.

Like foambells toss'd on a returning tide,
 Or on the strand, in fragments flung aside—
 Some waifs that in the warp of life appear,
 Are symbols of a presence ever dear—
 Symbols that do oblivion's sceptre spurn,
 And for the Poet bids the past return ;
 For him that past, where delicately wove,
 Are found the traces of a Mother's love—
 Traces the linguist challenges in vain,

Nor may interpreters their secrets gain.
 Yet is their idiom no such irksome kind
 As stolid students in preceptors find ;
 Fools that a mother's counsings despise,
 May from such tablets turn away their eyes ;
 But cleugh, and cairn, and cliff, and tower, and tree,
 Are redolent of sanctities to me.

Still full of life, and loveliness as when
 We gather'd Nuts, appears the Doveshauh glen—
 Doveshauh, that by possession had become
 The cushat's own hereditary home ;
 And in the Autumn schoolboys had a share
 Of what was found upon the hazels there.
 How strange that life and loveliness so long,
 Should grace the levees of a son of song :
 How prodigal of mirth and music, hours
 Of mine are wasted worshipping the flow'rs,
 In multitudes on multitudes around
 Distilling fragrance in that dell are found.
 Sleep'ng and sleepless, dreaming or awake,
 Unmarr'd the midnight rambles there I take,
 Waiting and watching, wearying, wond'ring how
 My mother is not there beside me now.

A blooming Thistle prickly green and grand
 There once beguiled me from thy guiding hand,
 And grasping at the coronal it wore,
 (A novice then unto the stings it bore,)
 A painful lesson on obtrusiveness
 Was learn'd that verse like mine can ill express ;
 And thy rebukes then with my tears combined,
 Are wedded with that thistle in my mind
 Hence utterance to many a thought is stumm'd,
 That would in tranquil moments be condemned.

But more endear'd is the *three corner'd* green,
 Where many a time my playmate thou hast been,
 By *use* and *wont*, permitt'd to divide
 What tracks the teams had worn on either side :
 In shape the jibsheet on a vessel might
 Some outline furnish to an artist's sight.
 But feeble aid poetic numbers lend
 Unto what length and breadth it may extend,
 Or syllable how beautifully true
 Uncall'd, the *gushat* comes before my view.
 That lovely spot in Edenlike repose,
 No ruthless hand had ventured to enclose ;

Left there disowned, (all else some Nobleman
 By might, or right kept underneath his ban,
 Nor of the titles to the Border land,
 Is any stronger than the sword in hand ;)
 Left there disown'd since *reevers* roam'd abroad,
 And found their safety in the nearest road
 To gain the bridge, that mossy, rough, and grey,
 There spans the valley in an awkward way,
 And looks forbidding in the fine detour
 Where Cleughside waters into Oxnam's pour.
 Nor could stupidity have farther gone
 Astray, constructing anything of stone ;
 Ashlers undress'd, if such deserve the name
 Of ashler, as it from the quarry came,
 Whilst slabs and boulders substitutes were made
 For coping, on the parapet were laid.

Narrow and old, and it was counted rare,
 That Border tourists noticed it was there ;
 Even Amateurs, and Antiquarians vain
 Of what is ugly eyed it with disdain ;
 Oft did the teamsters con, or curse a prayer,
 Who passed along the perilous affair.
 Nor were the cottagers which dwelt there few
 Who saw,—at least, believed they saw a crew
 Of fairies dancing, when the moon was bright,
 Upon the keystone at the noon of night,
 And vanish suddenly when day began
 To break at morn, as only fairies can.

But what avails that it may not fulfil
 The formula of Architect'ral skill,
 Or may no lustre—to the sketchbooks lend,
 Of rustic things enthusiasts may have penn'd ;
 Or be found wanting in that special grace
 Upon Cathedrals classic eyes can trace,—
 Seen thro' the shades of long departed years,
 To me—to me far other it appears.
 What tho' to ages past it may belong;
 It was the nurse of Albyn's earliest song :
 And cluster'd on that ancient thing, to me,
 Are charms, were trifles, Mother, but for thee.

Still day by day, unchanged, imposing, bold,
 Though uninvited, pleasing to behold—
 Those scenes of childhood eloquently claim,
 A place in mem'ry, Mother, with thy name ;
 They fill the pauses in life's labour made

And even devotion's sacredness invade ;
 Oft find admissions in the shades of night
 Within the halls that earthly planets light ;
 Our very eyes although in slumbers seal'd
 Do ready access to their presence yield,
 No blush is mine that on the poet's heart
 They make impressions that do not depart ;
 Their willing dupe unconsciously I spend
 Unmeasured moments at the old Bridgeend.

There in the evenings when the daisies grew,
 Sport would detain us till the falling dew ;
 What leisure moments then were thine to spare
 Brought with them frolics to engage in there
 Or in some gambol, where old *Moss* became
 The best accomplished actor in the game.
 Walks planu'd by thee on purpose for the "Boy,"
 The twilight found us ready to enjoy ;
 If one excursion was to get the air
 Another led us to the coppice, where
 The Mavis' nest was in a leafy tree
 I felt so anxious to climb up and see.
 Or down the banks of that poetic glen
 Where OXNAM flows,—familiar to me then
 With all its legends, and they were not few.
 Bat old Cragtow'r avouch'd them to be true ;
 Or up the margin of a restless rill,
 That comes complaining from the Pierslaw-hill,
 Without one single circumstance of fame
 That might be added to a naked name.
 Still, not a scene more beautiful and green
 Than Cleughside-burn in memory is seen.

How oft even now quite unawares I'm caught
 Reciting psalms and hymns thy lips have taught ;
 Or conning tasks thy manner made so sweet
 For me to learn, and easy to repeat ;
 "The Lord's my Shepherd," and the "Busy Bee,"
 Still lead me back to childhood and to thee—
 Still lead me back to hours when actions best
 The ruling passions of the soul attest ;
 When duly as the night and morning came
 That prayer of prayers, stamped with the Saviour's name
 In tones scarce audible—bow'd at her knee,
 My GOD, my mother heard me lisp to thee.

How vivid still before my eager gaze
 Those happy hours, those unforgotten days

Pass in review, as they were wont to be,
But never pass, my Mother, without thee.

Thy features on the infant poet's heart,
Are graven, never, never, to depart,
Graven alas ! when pain and suffering shew'd
What fond affection in thy bosom glow'd ;
And tho' but faint impressions then were made
Thine are they, Mother, and they do not fade.

How I delight thy lineaments to trace,
Adorned with equal modesty and grace :
Unwearied patience, charity as broad
As ever from a human bosom flow'd—
A heart to pity, and a hand to aid
As feeling prompted, more than duty bade ;
Thy kindness seemed like some perpetual rill
Exhausting always, but exhaustless still,
Simple thy faith, thy piety unfeign'd,
By precept taught, by practice not profaned :
A stranger to those sudden bursts of ire,
Unbridled passions frequently inspire ;
Deaf to the sland'ryer, or if thou didst hear,
The startling response always felt severe,
And those could give a neighbour's bosom pain
From thee, at least, no audience did obtain
If e'er unpleasing tokens would avow
A frown collecting on thy placid brow,
It was when candour had been set aside
And falsehood did the palm with truth divide.

Some attributes the soul must surely own
More than the senses that to us are known,
Some more electric method to impart
The latent longings of a mother's heart ;
How much beyond the music of thy voice—
A look of thine could make my heart rejoice.

Nor less a sigh escaping from thy breast,
Did mine with grief as instantly invest ;
But O thy smile,—*that* nothing can impair,
Such sway, and sweetness were commingled there—
Blest ornament set with peculiar grace
By Heaven itself on the maternal face,
And so resistless upon thine display'd
Whenever read, instinctively obey'd.
Nor less efficient were thy words of love
That could at once encourage and reprove.
The richest flow'rs that in creation spring—

The sweetest music woodland warblers sing—
 The deepest blush that captivates the eye
 On ocean mirror'd from the ev'ning sky,
 However bland or beautiful they be,
 Are always measured by a smile from thee.

Were it permitted,—ah ! but who can tell,
 What is permitted where immortals dwell ?
 Then if the spirits in a world of bliss
 E'er come from glory to revisit this,
 It cannot be impossible that thou,
 My Mother, may be present with me now,
 To listen ? Nay but rather to restrain
 As mortal praise, immortals may profane,

How often still by more than fancy led,
 I am beside thee at thy dying bed.
 Ah ! these sad moments it was ours to part
 Have never left, nor will they leave my heart ;
 Nor have the five long decades that are past
 A shadow o'er that day of sorrow cast.
 How often still this empty hand of mine
 Feels the last pressure ever came from thine,
 Or owns its gentle playfulness that told
 Of deeper love than language can unfold.
 How often still familiar to my ear,
 Some tones are whispered, tells me thou art near ;
 How often still I seem to hear thee speak,
 And feel as if thy breath were on my cheek.
 Who will persuade me that at day's decline,
 When the first stars of ev'ning faintly shine
 And night's soft footsteps o'er the landscape steal,
 Who will persuade me that I never feel
 (Delightful error—error if it be,)
 Sensations, fancy cannot give to me ;
 Sensations felt—but far beyond the sphere
 Of utterance for those sojourning here

Tho' time and distance cast a lengthened shade
 Between my vision and where thou art laid,
 Yet still unchanged, it is before my view
 And nightly there my visits I renew—
 Alike regardless whether darkness reign,
 Or day puts on his regal robe again.
 Wrapp'd in the tranquil slumbers of repose
 Or sharing toil, "when man to labour goes,"
 Still I am found beside thy place of rest
 In weeds of woe—a solitary guest.

The faithful tablet that was set to guard

Thy dear remains, abides there unimpair'd ;
 Fresh as it from the sculptor's chisel came,
 It bears the brief memorial of thy name,
 The little rosetree little hands with care
 Beside thee planted, is unwither'd there.
 And not a footstep ever seems to pass
 So near thy grave as to disturb the grass ;
 But desolation everywhere appears,
 Seen thro' the vistas in a mist of years.

Whilst wandering in this wilderness of woe,
 Nor path, nor landmark to direct me—Lo !
 I lift the volume of the past once more,
 And turn the pages of remembrance o'er ;
 Those pages hallowed with the lessons fraught
 Thy lips and life so eminently taught.
 To me they breathe authority divine,
 That filial love, and length of days combine ;
 Assur'd tho' clouds mysterious intervene,
 (Even when bereavements blessings may have been,)
 Another guardian,—an unerring guide
 Thro' the unseen a passage will provide,
 Until, without a stone to mark the spot
 I may lie down like thee and be forgot ;
 Few then to mourn,—perhaps not one to weep—
 Or wake the sleeper in his tranquil sleep.

Have I escaped the avenues of hell
 Where sin's high priest and human demons dwell ?
 Have I been kept from temples where a crowd
 Of satan's servants day and night are bow'd ;
 Have I been spared the tortures manifold
 That Mammon's worshippers must take with gold ?
 And those more awful,—if more awful 's known
 Among the votaries pleasure calls her own ;
 Or is an unoffensive conscience mine,
 Though sometimes wrong, yet never by design.
 A name alas ! though not from failings free,
 But few that would have claimed a blush from thee.
 If in declining years I can rejoice
 That " wisdom's ways " were early made my choice,
 It is to thee, my Mother, that I owe,
 All under providence I may be now.

